



## Shoreline Armor Focus Group Findings

Prepared for: WA Department of Fish and Wildlife and WA State Department of Natural Resources

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Prepared as part of the project: Social Marketing Strategy to Reduce Puget Sound Shoreline Armoring



## Project Background

The Puget Sound Marine & Nearshore Grant Program, co-led by Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resources, funded this project with the goal of reducing the total amount of traditional “hard” armor along Puget Sound marine shorelines. This can be accomplished by a combination of reducing new armor and removing existing armor. Hard armor refers to structures placed on the upper beach and at the toe of bluffs typically to reduce erosion, and is referred to using a variety of terms in the Puget Sound region, including the terms bulkhead, seawall, revetment, and rockery. Armor has been associated with numerous negative impacts to the Puget Sound nearshore. The *Social Marketing Strategy to Reduce Puget Sound Shoreline Armoring* project describes how we can overcome barriers and motivate residential landowners to voluntarily choose alternatives to hard armor.

The project team has used social marketing principles to research and design a program that will help reduce the amount of hard armor along Puget Sound marine shorelines. It resulted in:

- A Sound-wide GIS database of residential marine shore properties, including audience segmentation based on shore characteristics, and prioritization based on high value shoreforms and habitats with documented ecological impacts from shore hardening
- Descriptions of priority segments in terms of size, demographics and additional parcel data
- Desired audience behaviors for each segment
- Prioritized list of barriers and motivations for each desired armoring behavior
- Social marketing strategies and interventions to encourage the desired behaviors
- Toolkit for stakeholders to use in implementing social marketing campaigns in Puget Sound
- Detailed evaluation plan and report that details all project findings

The goal for this project is to create a social marketing behavior change strategy designed to influence priority segments of residential shoreline landowners to make behavior changes related to shore armor in order to achieve grant program goals. The strategy focuses on realistic approaches that use research-based incentives to overcome the specific barriers to reducing shore armor among key target audience segments.

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# **Shoreline Armor Focus Group Findings**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources plan to develop a set of tools designed to help property owners learn whether they can help reduce shoreline armoring around Puget Sound. Research with property owners and key informants has suggested that erosion concerns top the list of barriers to leaving natural shoreline or removing existing armor. Secondary is the cost of removing armor and/or constructing engineered soft shore protection that can both protect the property and prevent damage to shoreline habitat and shore processes. The draft tools offer incentives and information to promote the desired activities and alleviate some of the barriers to reducing shoreline armor.

Unarmored properties and their owners are most prominent in the northern counties of Puget Sound, while armored properties and their owners are more predominant in south Puget Sound. Since armored properties are more prevalent than unarmored among residential properties in Puget Sound, and since there are more barriers to armor removal than to maintaining a natural shoreline, two focus groups were planned with armored shoreline landowners and one was planned with unarmored shoreline landowners.

- April 9<sup>th</sup>, 7-8:30 p.m., Everett Holiday Inn Executive Board Room (Unarmored)
- April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1:30-3 p.m., Inn at Gig Harbor, Harbor Room (Armored)
- April 17<sup>th</sup>, 7-8:30 p.m., Seattle Airport Hilton, San Juan Room (Armored)

Free parking was provided at all three venues. Up to twelve participants each representing different properties were recruited for each group.

## FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT

Participants were volunteers who completed the Shoreline Property Owner survey in January, and who agreed to participate in more research if needed. Emails were sent to all potential participants with appropriate (armored or unarmored) properties. Following their RSVP participants were screened to ensure that:

- Their property was armored/unarmored.
- They had the authority to make decisions about the property (e.g. not leased land or controlled by a homeowners' association).
- They had a home on the property (no home does not disqualify participants, but we wanted to be sure that the groups are mostly attended by people with homes on their properties).

A portion of the armored property owners were further screened to determine if they were at all willing to consider removing their armor. This ensured that most of the people in the focus groups were the appropriate target audience, similar to those who the campaign would be trying to reach.

## **FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS**

A total of 23 property owners participated in the focus groups. A brief demographic survey provided descriptive information about the participants and their shoreline properties. See Appendix A for complete frequencies.

Participants were mostly male (74%) and age 55 or over (70%). Only one was under the age of 45. A majority (70%) had at least a college degree or more. Thirty-five percent described themselves as retired and 52% said they were employed full time.

Participants also shared information about their property:

- About half of the participants have owned their property for 20 years or more.
- Only three have a home that is less than 10 years old; most (70%) said their home was 40 years old or more.
- Five of the properties were in Island County and four were in Pierce. The only counties not represented were Clallam, Thurston and Snohomish.
- Thirty-five percent lived in a different county than their shoreline property.
- Half (12) described their property as no or low bank; only two were described as high bank property.
- Thirty percent said their homes are situated within 30 feet of the shoreline or bluff.
- Shore length ranged from 50 to 600 feet with a median length of 100 feet.

## FINDINGS

### EROSION/ARMOR CONCERNS

Over half of the participants (armored and unarmored) expressed some concern about erosion and most mentioned seeing signs of erosion on their property. Among those who were not concerned, there were multiple mentions of the house being far enough back that it was not something they were worried about.

Owners of unarmored properties who were concerned about erosion often mentioned neighboring properties with armor that were causing erosion problems. For these owners there was a significant sense of alarm and more imminent concern than those expressed by the armored property owners. Most were reluctant to consider adding hard armor and were highly motivated to learn more about alternatives and their efficacy.

Owners of armored properties who were concerned about erosion frequently described annual or more frequent king tides that breached their armor, as well as severe storm damage and failing bulkheads. Three participants in the armored discussions had recently repaired or replaced failing bulkheads. They were most reluctant to consider making changes, though they were curious to know what options and information might be available.

One participant shared a story about how his armor had partially failed and how he is seeing significant erosion in that specific area. Shortly after a section of his wall collapsed, he consulted with a shoreline engineer and she was adamant about his not using armor to solve the problem. The remainder of the wall has been undermined to the footings. On the engineer's advice he put a "huge" stump in the eroded space which seems to be helping. He expressed strong interest in alternatives to hard armor.

Another participant had recently replaced his armor at a cost of \$50,000 with \$15,000 in permitting fees. He reported that this took 18 months and was a very frustrating process. However he described many benefits of the extra work that was required. For example, placing stumps in the tidelands and filling in with some material that has encouraged the beach and feeding from area ducks. He also wanted to install a dock.

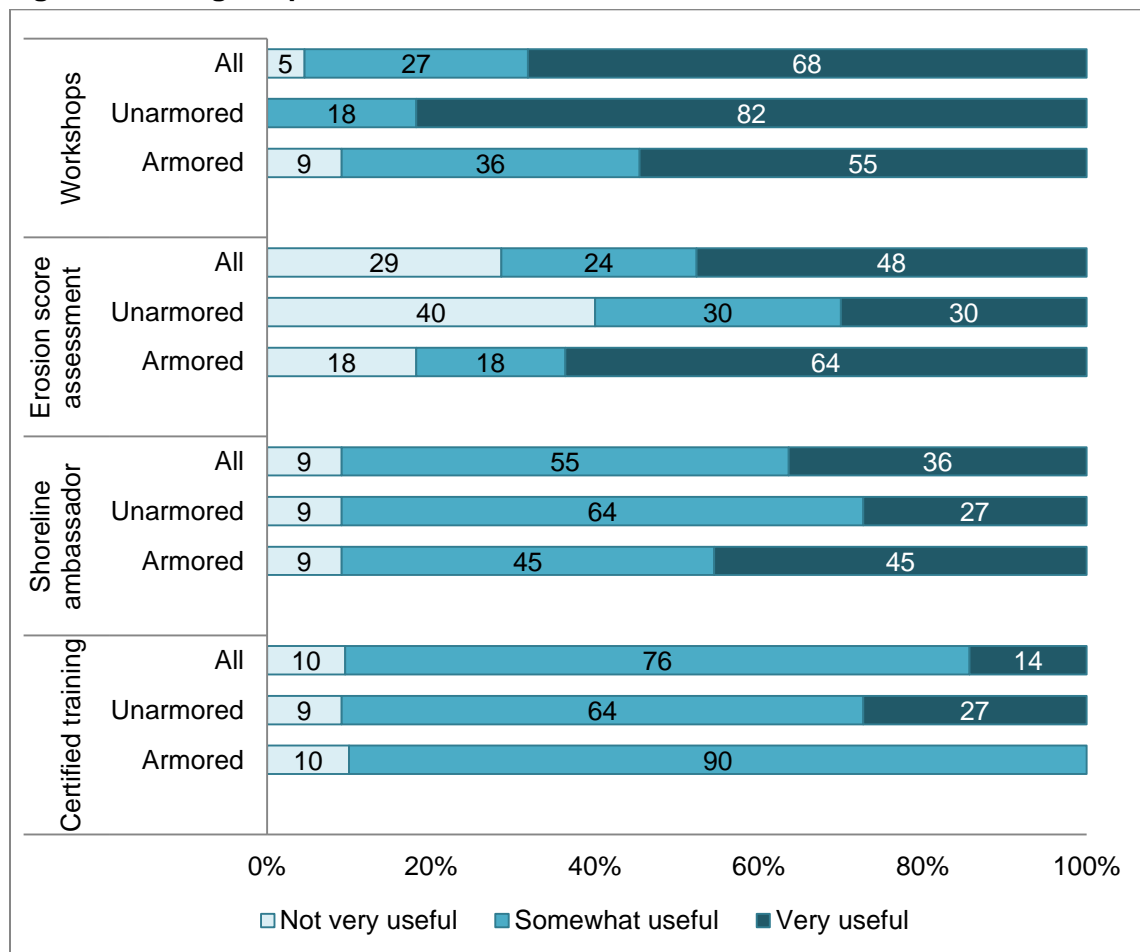
## TOOLS TO ADDRESS CONCERNS

Participants were asked to comment on both informational resources and financial resources that could be a part of the campaign.

### Informational resources

Four types of informational resources were described to the participants: an on-site erosion score assessment, a shoreline ambassador, certification for shoreline professionals and workshops. Participants were then asked to privately rate how useful each resource would be to them (*very useful*, *somewhat useful* or *not very useful*). Figure 1 shows their responses. Ratings showed that at first hearing about the concept, workshops were received most positively, with 68% calling this *very useful*. This was an especially popular resource for unarmored property owners.

**Figure 1. Ratings of potential informational resources**





After rating the brief description of the tools, the facilitator asked the groups to comment on what sounded particularly appealing about the resources as well as any concerns that they had.

The unarmored focus group expressed particularly strong enthusiasm for any type of information. Multiple participants mentioned feeling ill-informed about their options and that they were hungry for any informational resources. One participant suggested a comprehensive website with a compendium of information materials would be useful; many in the group agreed.

All three groups generated the most positive discussion around the concept of workshops and the shoreline ambassador. The workshops were attractive because the groups perceived these as low cost and that participation would be simple and involve a low commitment. One reservation about workshops was expressed regarding “weekend residents.” They commented on how difficult it is to engage in community level programming when their visits are brief and often restricted to weekends. Those who felt the workshop was less attractive said that they thought general information was not as useful as information specific to their own property. Several mentioned hopes that tours of properties would be included.

The shoreline ambassador resource was received well. Both groups liked the idea of being able to reach someone with questions about the specifics of their own property, and on their own timeline. Several participants indicated that this would be especially helpful if it was localized with information about their own county and area, perhaps even being staffed at a local level. One participant said that it would be nice to have someone to turn to who was interested in providing good customer service. In most cases, he said, the job of the bureaucrat is to say “no” or simply file paperwork, not to help the landowner. An ambassador was seen as a potentially friendly, helpful alternative to permitting and regulatory personnel. Participants’ described prior experiences with government personnel. To them, decisions seemed arbitrary, based idiosyncratically on the knowledge and judgment of the person who did the review/inspection. Often when multiple personnel were involved they would contradict each other. Making the ambassador a third-party was encouraged by one group—perhaps a member of a non-profit who had no stake in the matter, such as the conservation district or extension, was recommended.

The certified contractor training elicited the least amount of feedback. However, several commented on the challenges around finding a qualified contractor that really understands the complexity of working with erosion and they would like to know that the

contractors they work with can be trusted. One participant summarized this discussion with “Who wouldn’t want your contractor to be certified?” If septic inspectors are required to be certified, why not require the same of shoreline contractors?

One armored landowner expressed doubt that contractors would have any business incentive to make optimal recommendations. He felt that no matter how much certification and education a contractor could get, they would not be able to provide an unbiased recommendation because their bread and butter could be compromised. Incentivizing the contractors by making it equally profitable to remove armor as to replace or repair it was suggested.

Although most armored property owners rated an erosion assessment score *very useful*, this tool generated the most controversy. On the one hand, the participants talked about how more information is always better. However in each group there was at least some concern that the assessment and the resulting score could be somehow used against them. They asked about whether the score could potentially damage the valuation of their property, be used for regulatory purposes or impact insurance rates. Similarly, there was a concern that getting an assessment would open the property up to further scrutiny for other impacts, such as septic system performance or other regulatory issues.

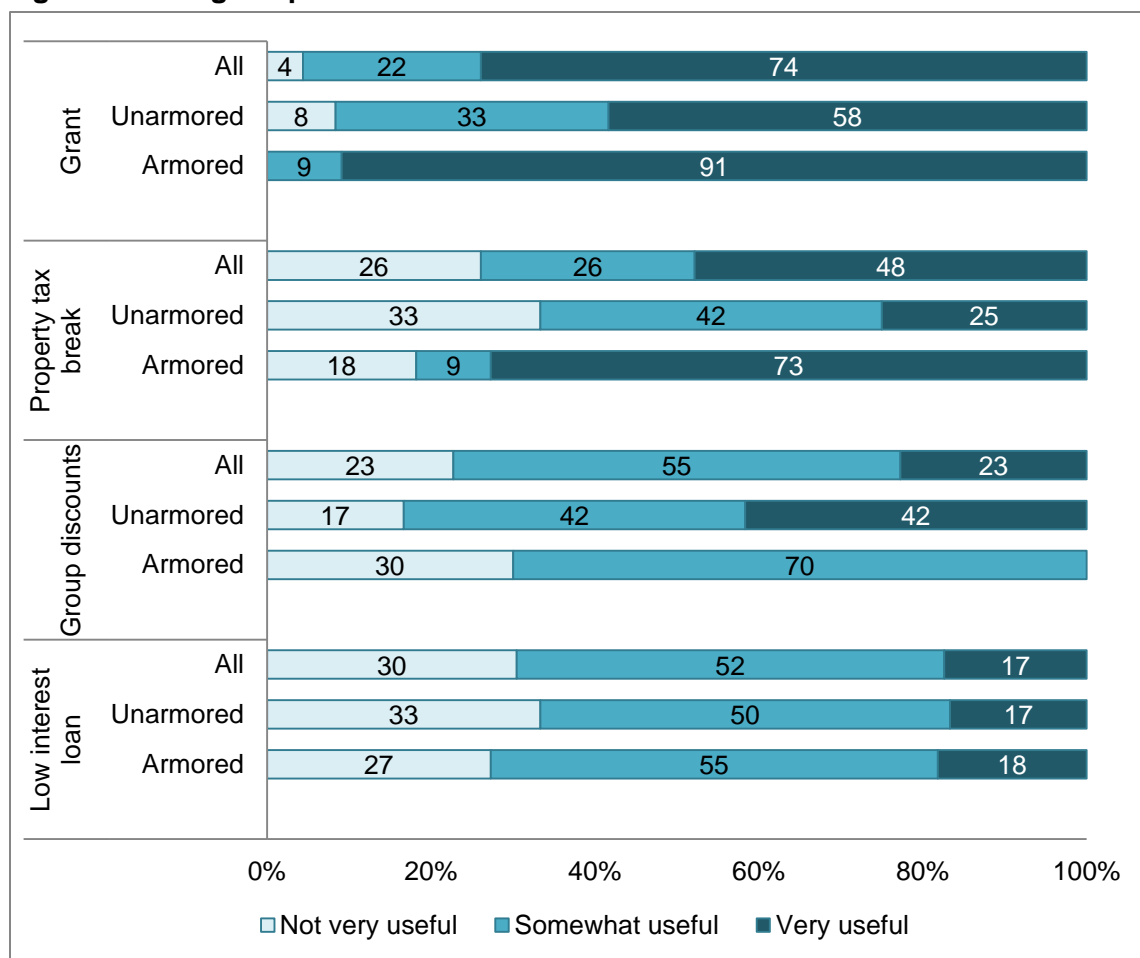
Participants were asked if they had any other suggestions for informational resources. Several offered general feedback to localize information as much as possible and to utilize technology. Here are a few of the specific ideas that were mentioned:

- Online resources where they could get more detailed information and see case examples.
- Tours/visits to soft shore protection sites
- One mentioned a “club” of all shoreline land owners
- Shoreline landowner handbook for people who’ve just purchased property
- Simulation or model of specific shorelines to see how it would look with either a naturalized beach or soft shore protection. This suggestion included models of impacts of 10-year weathering.

### Financial resources

Four types of financial resources were described to the participants: property tax breaks, grants, low interest loans and discounts for group projects. Participants were then asked to privately rate how useful each resource would be to them (*very useful, somewhat useful or not very useful*). Figure 2 shows their responses. Ratings showed that when first hearing about these financial resources, participants were particularly interested in grants, that property tax breaks were more appealing to armored property owners than unarmored property owners, and that low interest loans were generally considered to be only moderately useful.

**Figure 2. Ratings of potential financial resources**



After privately rating each of the potential financial tools, the facilitator asked the groups to comment on what sounded particularly appealing about the resources as well as any concerns that they had. Participants were also asked to be specific about amounts of financial support that would be persuasive.

In general, across all the various proposed financial tools, participants indicated that a percentage made more sense than a flat rate. Participants were generally reluctant to offer specific figures.

The concept of tax breaks generated the most discussion. A few armored participants had concerns that this was an elitist approach, giving already “privileged” property owners more of a break; another shared concerns about disenfranchising low-income counties (they would want someone to make up the difference to their county for their break). Several participants also pointed out that this would not be as appealing in counties with very low tax rates (like Jefferson County). Some specific suggestions that came out of the property tax discussion included:

- If it would be most useful if it covered over 10 years and 30-50% of the cost.
- Use property tax rebate to reward unarmored property owners.

Participants were not very enthusiastic about low interest loans. One participant pointed out that the rate is not as important as an easy-to-access loan and many agreed that it is difficult to get loans from banks since the financial collapse of 2008. Streamlined loan processing would be a benefit as much as the low rate. Others said that interest rates are low right now, so it just doesn’t have the draw that it might have had in the past. One participant noted that when he participated in a septic replacement program on Hood Canal, he was able to qualify for an even lower rate than the program could provide. One said that having a loan, grant or tax break available to make a specific choice about his shoreline could tip the balance and be enough of an incentive to him to choose another option that they might not have otherwise considered.

Comments about grants were limited but positive.

In one group, participants mentioned amounts that ranged from 15% to 80% of the project cost would be especially appealing, but they were more interested in talking about the benefit that they would get out of the project. They talked about how they could justify paying for armor removal if it increased the value of the property. This was the incentive that they were most focused on, although one member suggested a variation on a grant in the form of a “thank you” payment or rebate after the project was finished (instead of a support in executing it).

Discussion indicated that the tipping point for what seemed attractive hinged on the motivation behind the potential removal project. For example, one participant was interested in removing his bulkhead because his wife found it unattractive and he had a sense that it might be better for the environment (though he was skeptical, since his

unarmored neighbors' beaches were much the same as his). He said if 80% of the cost was covered he would find that attractive. In comparison, another participant in the same group who believed his bulkhead was starting to show signs of failure and who was going to have to make a decision in the near future indicated that a smaller percent (like 10%) might motivate him to choose a soft shore alternative. Participants for whom a project was imminent indicated that they would be influenced by smaller amounts of financial support.

The idea of discounts for group projects was more appealing to unarmored participants than those with armored properties. Several participants with unarmored properties discussed how their property was impacted by their neighboring armored properties. One of the unarmored property owners expressed appreciation for an incentive for working together but had concerns about how to reach out to neighbors who might not be as interested—especially properties that have armor.

One of the groups of armored participants had strong feelings that group projects would “never work.” They felt that their experience demonstrated too great of variation in preference, timing and needs across properties, financial circumstances and personalities. They commented on tensions among neighbors and were very skeptical that this would be a worthwhile approach. Others in the group concurred, with one citing conflicts already occurring among his own neighbors.

All three groups expressed a sentiment that the finances were less important than a sense of security and trust that their solution will work, whether that was leaving property unarmored, installing soft shore protection, or letting armored property naturalize. One member of the unarmored group suggested a warranty or some sort of insurance from the state that soft shore protection would work and that if it failed, the state would pay for any restoration required. A similar sentiment was expressed in the armored groups regarding the removal of armor. More than financial support they would like to see confidence expressed in the form of a financial promise for help if the state preferred solution were to fail.

### Low cost, streamlined permits

Armored participants were also asked to comment on a fifth type of financial incentive: a reduced cost, streamlined permit process. This was extremely appealing, especially with cost reductions. Anything to simplify the process was strongly welcomed.

One armored shoreline landowner who had replaced armor talked about the cost and difficulties of permitting. *“The permitting process is the most soul crushing element of*

*any big project. You have one bureaucrat after another traipsing across your property making value judgments. It seems like sometimes it's about you as a person because you are doing something that they don't want you to do. They are throwing up obstacles in your path."* This generated some discussion that resulted in some agreement that if it was easier and less expensive to remove armor than replace it, this would definitely be an effective incentive.

### **INSTALLING SOFT SHORE PROTECTION IF NEEDED (UNARMORED ONLY)**

The unarmored group was presented with a description of soft-shore protection along with some "before and after" photos of soft-shore protection projects and some very general figures about the cost of projects like this in comparison to installation of hard armor. They were asked to respond and comment on what they found appealing about soft shore alternatives and what kinds of concerns they would have.

The group discussed the rationale behind this approach. One participant told the group that it is current thinking that it would be better to remove hard armoring and let the shoreline return to its natural state to provide improved habitat for wildlife and general ecology. A few others indicated some knowledge and understanding in this area, but most were dubious about the basic premise of this endeavor. They were unfamiliar with the concept that hard armor has a negative impact on Puget Sound.

The prevailing tenor of the group was skepticism that soft shore alternatives can be trusted. Some talked about examples of shoreline land owners attempting to install their own versions of soft shore alternatives and how ineffective they were in holding up against high tides and winter storms. In the case of replacing hard armor, a few participants questioned the sense in taking out a perfectly good wall and replacing it with something that they believed would wash away in the next storm.

Participants had many questions:

- How long will that last?
- What are the maintenance costs associated with soft shore protection?
- Will it work for medium or high bank properties?
- Does installation of soft shore necessitate a loss in footage of property?

Several participants were intrigued and would like to see more examples with a solid history of success. As one participant said:

*“You need a history of experience in a specific environment. I could learn to trust it if I see it working in the situation that I face. That’s how engineers learn to trust things. They calculate things in all kinds of ways but it is the experience of having seen it work that allows you to trust.”*

Participants felt that their limited understanding of this alternative prohibited them from accepting it. One participant summed it up succinctly this way:

*“I need to understand why they think this technology is better”*

## PRIMARY MESSAGES

The facilitator presented seven different messages about shoreline protection. Participants were asked to consider each message and to discuss their reaction. The facilitator probed to elicit comments about general appeal, believability and persuasiveness.

The statements were:

1. Leaving your shore unarmored/removing shoreline armor is important for the health of the Puget Sound and maintains the natural beauty of your property.
2. Maintaining a natural or soft shoreline protects the health of the entire Puget Sound ecosystem.
3. Unarmored shoreline habitats provide food and refuge for the fish that orca, salmon and seabird populations rely on.
4. For many properties erosion is a slow, natural process that doesn’t necessarily pose a risk to your property.
5. A beautiful natural beach can improve your property value.
6. Shoreline armor does not necessarily improve your property’s value.
7. Shoreline armor does not necessarily protect your property from erosion.

Participants generally liked statements that talked about the health of Puget Sound (1 & 2). This seemed to resonate with the people in the room who appeared the most informed about environmental impacts of hard armor. However one participant felt it was hyperbole to suggest that any one property’s armor could make an impact on the health of the entire sound (a theme which came up multiple times). The statement that seemed to have the most traction was: “Unarmored shoreline habitats provide food and refuge

for the fish that orca, salmon and seabird populations rely on.” Many participants liked the specificity of the statement and recommended developing more like it.

While participants liked that the message mentioned specific impacts (3), several commented that they didn’t like the use of the word “unarmored” (in this and other statements) and preferred the concept of “a natural shoreline.”

Several participants rejected statements that included language like “can improve” or “does not necessarily protect” (4,5,6,7). They said that these were weak messages and sounded like they were asking for argument. Certainty was very important to them in the messages.

Some thought statements about property value were not very believable (e.g. #6 “shoreline armor does not necessarily improve your property’s value”). One armored property owner said that he had no doubt that unarmored shoreline property was a better value in general, but that in the case of his own property he couldn’t have a house without the armor, and therefore the property value was certainly better with a bulkhead.

One statement that created some challenges was #4, “For many properties erosion is a slow, natural process that doesn’t necessarily pose a risk to your property.” Several said that they believed this in principal, but some mentioned examples where they felt that erosion is not slow (sudden events) or a natural process (ferries, ships, runoff from new development). Others challenged that erosion events can indeed pose significant risk. The recent landslide in Snohomish County was mentioned in each group. While not a shoreline event, this example was certainly prominent when discussing erosion and risk.

### *Cost-related messages*

Armored property owners were presented with three cost-related messages.

1. There are tools available to help you save money and do what’s best for your property and the environment.
2. Removing armor can be expensive up front, but it means that you won’t have to worry about upkeep to a bulkhead. Natural solutions can be cheaper over the long run and are better for the environment.
3. Removing armor doesn’t have to break the bank. We can connect you with tax breaks, grants, loans or discounts that will help offset the cost of your project.

Neither of these groups had negative comments about any of the statements. There was clear consensus that the third of these statements was the most enticing: “Removing armor doesn’t have to break the bank. We can connect you with tax breaks, grants, loans, or discounts that will help offset the cost of your project.” They said the message



was very clear and specific and directly addressed their concerns. One said that it swept away his uncertainty and hesitation about whether he could afford to do it.

### *Call to action*

The armored groups were presented with this statement: “It’s important to get familiar with your property and what it needs. Start by getting a free erosion assessment.”

The response was very positive. Several participants commented on their sense of responsibility as a landowner and felt that this message resonated. They seemed drawn to the first part of the statement, remembering that the erosion assessment could lead to unintended intervention or penalties.

## LIKELIHOOD TO ENGAGE

At the end of the armored focus groups it was clear that some participants were not appropriate targets for armor removal; either they have recently installed a bulkhead, their home is too close to the bulkhead, or otherwise have strong beliefs that their property could not withstand removal. However, just over half of the armored participants (seven out of twelve) indicated that they would follow up to get more information if they could.

One participant shared his experience in trying to find information about letting a part of his shoreline naturalize. He said that he found it hard to locate firms that could offer an alternative approach to hard armor and that when he did they were not very responsive. When he inquired with contractors about removing half of his wall they argued that the permitting process would be so expensive and complicated that it was simply not worth the effort to replace half and remove half of the armor. He was led to believe that his only viable option was to replace the entire length.

## RECURRING THEMES

There were several themes that arose repeatedly in the focus groups, in multiple conversational contexts and across the different groups. These are the most prominent themes:

Participants want **assurance**. This was one of the most prominent, persistent themes. They want to know that soft shore protection is proven technology or that they will have a money-back guarantee if it doesn’t work for them.

Participants want **more information**. They believe it is hard to find information that is relevant to their interests that they can trust. This was particularly important to unarmored property owners who had immediate erosion concerns because they don't want to change their property or incur a large expense unnecessarily. They repeatedly stressed their desire to do the right thing, but felt ill-equipped to make those decisions. For armored property, the interest was a little more academic. They knew they were protected—no immediate fears, much lower anxieties, even among those with failing armor. They knew they could always do what's been done before and be okay.

Armored participants were willing to making changes for **environmental reasons**. However not all were convinced there would actually be environmental benefit at their site if they removed armor. Some gave examples in their own communities about how they would expect to see a healthier beach along sections of unarmored shoreline but that they can't see any difference. They wanted more evidence that there is indeed a direct correlation between removing a bulkhead and ecological health.

**Timeliness** is key—when there's a problem with armor, people need to have easy, fast access to the right information.

For unarmored properties, the **diversity of each property** makes it challenging to apply broad decisions or planning across all properties. Armored folks had shared experiences and were more likely to see commonalities amongst themselves. Armored participants often talked about discussing their armor with neighbors and getting advice and information from them. Neighbors, not government agencies or non-profits, appear to be the primary source of information currently being used. In other words, there is a vacuum for armor-related information; one that could be readily filled by something useful, such as the tools this campaign proposes.

Many participants expressed **distrust** of their local government. This was especially salient around discussions of permitting. Participants thought that local government officials often take an adversarial approach by default and in some smaller jurisdictions there was some sentiment that officials would not have necessary expertise. Participants also expressed frustration over examples of inconsistent practices and permitting, for example, neighbors asking for forgiveness instead of permission and getting away with it. Unarmored property owners talked about an interest in seeing the local government show more strength in leadership to address inconsistencies.

## CONCLUSION

Based on focus group discussions, the campaign should focus on workshops and a shoreline ambassador resource (like a hotline) that is operated at the local level. However both of these resources should be outsourced to local non-profits and not branded with the county or local jurisdiction's governmental body.

A certification program would be one way to assist local landowners in finding appropriate and trustworthy contractors, but an additional financial component should be considered to reward contractors for engaging in projects that result in net reduction of shoreline hard armor.

The most desirable financial incentive would be a combination of grants and streamlined permit processes for removal of armor or installing soft shore protection. An insurance program should also be investigated.

Messaging should avoid the term “unarmored” and focus on “natural beaches.” A call to action that addresses landowner responsibility to be informed and knowledgeable will be received well by the target audience, those who already feel a sense of responsibility and want to know more.

## APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS AND PARCEL CHARACTERISTICS

For how many years have you or your family owned your shoreline property?		
	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	4	18.2
10-14 years	7	31.8
20-39 years	5	22.7
40 years or more	6	27.3
Total	22	100.0

How old is the house on your shoreline property?		
	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	1	4.5
5-9 years	2	9.1
10-14 years	1	4.5
20-39 years	2	9.1
40 years or more	15	68.2
Not applicable – no home there	1	4.5
Total	22	100.0

In what county is your shoreline property?		
	Frequency	Percent
Island	5	22.7
Jefferson	2	9.1
King	1	4.5
Kitsap	2	9.1
Mason	1	4.5
Pierce	4	18.2
San Juan	1	4.5
Skagit	3	13.6
Whatcom	3	13.6
Total	22	100.0

<b>In what county is your primary residence?</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Island	3	13.6
King	7	31.8
Kitsap	3	13.6
Mason	1	4.5
Pierce	4	18.2
Skagit	1	4.5
Snohomish	1	4.5
Whatcom	2	9.1
Total	22	100.0

<b>How would you describe the height of the property's bank, slope or bluff?</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
No bank	4	18.2
Low	8	36.4
Medium	8	36.4
High	2	9.1
Total	22	100.0

<b>Approximately how far is the house from the shoreline or top of the bluff?</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
10 to 29 feet	7	31.8
30 to 49 feet	6	27.3
50 to 99 feet	4	18.2
100 feet or more	3	13.6
Not applicable – no home there	2	9.1
Total	22	100.0

<b>Approximately how many feet of waterfront does the property have?</b>	
Min	50
Max	600
Mean	163
Median	100

<b>Employment</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Employed full time	12	54.5
Employed seasonally or part time	1	4.5
Unemployed	1	4.5
Retired	8	36.4
Total	22	100.0

<b>What is the last year of schooling you completed?</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
High school	1	4.5
Some college	5	22.7
Vocational school	1	4.5
College degree	6	27.3
Graduate/professional school	9	40.9
Total	22	100.0

<b>Which of the following includes your age:</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
35 to 44	1	4.5
45 to 54	5	22.7
55 to 64	8	36.4
65 or older	8	36.4
Total	22	100.0

<b>Are you:</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	17	77.3
Female	5	22.7
Total	22	100.0

<b>Armor Status</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Unarmored	12	54.5
Armored	11	45.5
Total	22	100.0

## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP FACILITATION GUIDE

### OVERVIEW (5-10 MINUTES)

1. As participants arrive, they fill out nametags, first name only (alternative—have table tents with names pre-printed). Fill out brief information form (survey).
2. Facilitator introduces self as the moderator and introduces the note taker and observer(s).
3. Facilitator describes the purpose of the meeting:

As you know the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, together with the Department of Natural Resources have been talking with shoreline property owners like you about your experiences and practices on your land. They have learned a great deal and are developing a campaign that they hope will help support shoreline landowners in better understanding their options for making informed decisions about their shoreline and how their choices impact the health of Puget Sound. The purpose of our conversation is to let you know what they've learned, what they'd like to present to shoreline landowners in response to what they've learned, and to get your feedback on it.

4. How will we proceed?

I will introduce questions for you to consider and will be looking for responses from all participants. The discussion will last for almost 90 minutes, will be recorded, and will cover questions about shore erosion, protecting shorelines and protecting wildlife habitat around Puget Sound. We will use your first names in our discussion. No names will be used in any reports. If you would like me to turn off the voice recorder at any time so you can make a comment, just let me know.

*Note location of bathrooms. Invite participants to stand, get refreshments or use the bathrooms as they need to.*

5. We have a few ground rules for the group.
  1. Stay on-topic – it's partly my job to be sure that we cover all the information that we need in the time we have allotted, so please forgive me if I redirect you from other subjects that may come up.
  2. Please wait until another person has finished speaking before you start speaking.
  3. If you've already contributed to the conversation but notice others haven't, please help me by giving everyone a chance to share their viewpoint.
  4. Please don't carry on side conversations.
  5. Please treat everyone's ideas with respect.

At the end of the session we'll have you sign for an envelope containing \$50 in cash as our thanks to you for coming to help us.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Survey questions: Age, sex, county of shoreline property, county of residence, years owned, employed/not-employed, age of home on property

## UNARMORED GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (1.25 HOURS)

### Introductions

*5-10 minutes*

Let's go around the room with introductions. Could each of you take one minute and give your first name and tell us where your shoreline property is?

### Main Topic 1: Erosion concerns

*8-10 minutes*

Q1. Have you seen any erosion on your property?

- a. If yes – are you concerned about it? Why or why not?
- b. (if unconcerned) What keeps you from feeling concerned about the erosion that you see?
- c. (If concerned) Have you done anything about your concerns or the erosion you've seen? For example, have you spoken to anyone about it?
- d. If concerned – what would it take to address your concerns?

### Main Topic 2: Tools to address concerns

*15-20 minutes*

There are four pieces of the campaign that could help property owners get information to address their erosion concerns.

1. Free erosion score assessment – owners would schedule a time for an expert to visit their property to assess their erosion risk and provide an easy-to-understand erosion score for their property. Depending on your property's characteristics, the expert advisor can direct you to additional resources for help.
2. Shoreline Ambassador – free advice from a local or state-level expert who can direct you to local resources and explain the broad concerns, policies and approaches, and any permitting processes that might concern you.
3. Certified professional training – for those who inspect shorelines, install measures that protect against erosion and who need to understand alternatives to adding hard armor. You would receive referrals to these people from your local government.
4. Workshops for property owners to address how to create a healthy shoreline, understand erosion, and more.

*Solicit questions about these. Provide a feedback card asking them to privately rate each idea from extremely useful to not-at-all useful.*



Q2. Which of these would you say is most appealing to you?

Q3. What would prompt you to sign up to use any of these?

Q4. Are there any other ideas for things that would help you get information you trust to address your concerns about erosion?

### **Main Topic 3: Installing soft shore protection if needed**

*15-20 minutes*

One recommendation from an erosion score assessment may be to install engineered soft shore protection if your property is vulnerable (show pictures used in survey). The cost of installing engineered soft shore protection can range widely, but on average for a 100' shoreline it's estimated between \$13,000 and \$32,000. Installing new hard armor, such as a seawall or bulkhead is estimated to run about \$13,000-15,000 more than that.

Q5. What do you think of that potential approach to dealing with erosion if you needed to for your property?

- a. What do you find appealing?
- b. What doesn't sound good to you? (listen for trustworthiness, expense barriers)
- c. What would you need to know/who would you want to consult with in order to trust it?
- d. Would tours of properties that did this be important to you?

Some financial assistance may be available to help with installing engineered soft shore protection:

- Tax breaks
- Grants
- Low interest loans
- Discounts for group projects (i.e., neighbors joining together)

*Have them rate each one as how likely they would be to use it in this situation.*

Q6. If you were trying to make a decision between hard armor and soft shore protection, how would you want to see those options structured?

- a. How much and how long of a tax break would keep you from installing hard armor instead of soft shore protection? Percentage or fixed amount?
- b. How much of a grant would motivate you? \$1,000? \$2,000? A percentage?
- c. Would a loan be enticing? What interest rate? 100% of the cost or a portion of it?

### **Main topic 4: Primary messages**

*15-20 minutes*

The campaign would like to put some messages out to shoreline landowners who don't have armor that will help them understand some key points that we've discussed.

*For each of the following, provide a card, have them read and rate their feeling about it privately. Then show each on a slide and ask for their feedback/input on the wording. What they like, dislike about the messages. Would any motivate you to keep your shoreline as it is, or to avoid installing armor?*

- Leaving your shore unarmored is important for the health of the Puget Sound and maintains the natural beauty of your property.
- Maintaining a natural or soft shoreline protects the health of the entire Puget Sound ecosystem. Unarmored shoreline habitats provide food and refuge for the fish that orca, salmon and seabird populations rely on.
- For many properties erosion is a slow, natural process that doesn't necessarily pose a risk to your property.
  - Check in about believability of this message.
  - Does erosion imply "dangerous?" or is "risk" sufficient?
  - How could they be convinced of its validity?
- A beautiful natural beach can improve your property value.
- Shoreline armor does not necessarily improve your property's value.
- Shoreline armor does not necessarily protect your property from erosion.

Call to action (present for feedback as a closing)

- It's important to get familiar with your property and what it needs. Start by getting an erosion assessment.

## DEBRIEF (5-10 MINUTES)

- Follow-up by moderator to further discuss any unexplored remarks.
- Let participants know how the information from the discussion will be used.
- Answer any participant question.
- Let participants know we are closing the discussion and that the observers are happy to talk with them one-on-one.
- Thank participants.

## ARMORED GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (1.25 HOURS)

### Introductions

*5-10 minutes*

Let's go around the room with introductions. Could each of you give your first name and tell us where your shoreline property is and what your shoreline looks like—what kind of armor do you have there?

### Main Topic 1: Armor concerns

*8-10 minutes*

1. Have you had any concerns about your shoreline armor in recent years?
  - a. Have you done anything about those concerns or thought about doing anything?

### Main Topic 2: Removal concerns

*15-20 minutes*

The purpose of the campaign is to help shoreline landowners with armor determine whether or not they can benefit from removing armor on their property and allowing the natural shoreline and shore processes to occur. In some cases no armor can be removed without risk to existing buildings. In some cases it's not feasible to remove all armor, but perhaps a portion could be removed. Most people won't know whether it's feasible without some expert advice. In some cases, armor could be replaced with engineered soft shore protection which helps protect property but also benefits Puget Sound.

There are three things we've identified that are important to address:

1. First and foremost is there potential for erosion and damage to the property if armor was removed.
2. Second is the cost of removing it and/or replacing it with something that could be better for the shoreline.
3. Third is the complexity of regulations and the difficulty of getting permits to get it done.

There are four pieces of the campaign that could help property owners get information to address their erosion concerns.

1. Free erosion score assessment – owners would schedule a time for an expert to visit their property to assess their erosion risk and provide an easy-to-understand erosion score for their property. Depending on your property's characteristics, the expert advisor can direct you to additional resources for help.
2. Shoreline Ambassador – Free advice from a local or state-level expert who can direct you to local resources and explain the broad concerns, policies and approaches.

3. Certified contractor training - for those who inspect shorelines, install measures that protect against erosion and who need to understand alternatives to adding hard armor. You would receive referrals to these people from your local government agents.
4. Workshops for property owners to address how to create a healthy shoreline, understand erosion, and more.

*Solicit questions about these. Provide a feedback card asking them to privately rate each idea from extremely useful to not-at-all useful.*

Q1. Which of these would you say is most appealing?

Q2. What would prompt you to sign up to use any of these?

Q3. Are there any other ideas for things that would help you get information you trust to address your concerns about removing all or part of your armor?

### **Main Topic 3: Cost of removal**

*15-20 minutes*

If it's feasible and the landowner wants to go ahead with the work there are some cost considerations.

The campaign may be able to offer some financial assistance to help with removing hard armor including:

- Tax breaks
- Grants
- Low interest loans
- Group rates for neighborhoods with shoreline owners who apply for armor removal together

*Have them rate each one as how likely they would be to use it in this situation.*

Q5. If you were trying to make a decision about whether to remove all or some of your armor, how would you want to see financial assistance structured?

- a. How much and how long of a tax break would keep you from installing hard armor instead? Percentage or fixed amount?
- b. How much of a grant would motivate you? \$1,000? \$5,000? A percentage?
- c. Would a loan be enticing? What interest rate? 100% of the cost or a portion of it?

One option could be to create a new streamlined permitting process for shoreline landowners who want to remove armor. It could be offered at little or no cost, have fewer requirements and have a quick turnaround time.

Q6. How would an easy, quick turnaround permit influence your thinking about armor removal?

Q7. How would it be to have the cost of your armor-removal permit be waived or substantially reduced?

#### **Main Topic 4: Primary Messages**

*15-20 minutes*

The campaign would like to put some messages out to shoreline landowners that will help them understand some key points that we've discussed.

*For each of the following, provide a card, have them read and rate their feeling about it privately. Then show them on a slide and ask for their feedback/input on the wording. What they like, dislike about the messages.*

- Removing shoreline armor will improve the look of your property, increase access to your beach and help protect the environment.
- Removing shoreline armor influences the health of the entire Puget Sound ecosystem.
- Unarmored shoreline habitats provide food and refuge for the fish that orca, salmon and seabird populations rely on.
- For many properties erosion is a slow, natural process that doesn't necessarily pose a risk to your property.
  - Check in about believability of this message.
  - Does erosion imply "dangerous?" or is "risk" sufficient?
  - How could they be convinced of its validity?
- A beautiful natural beach can improve your property value.
- Shoreline armor does not necessarily improve your property's value.
- Shoreline armor does not necessarily protect your property from erosion.

Q8. Here are three statements about the cost of removing armor. Which of these do you find appealing? Does anything about them bother you?

- There are tools available to help you save money and do what's best for your property and the environment.
- Removing armor can be expensive up front, but it means that you won't have to worry about upkeep to a bulkhead. Natural solutions can be cheaper over the long run and are better for the environment.
- Removing armor doesn't have to break the bank. We can connect you with tax breaks, grants, loans, or discounts that will help offset the cost of your project.

#### **Call to action**

- It's important to get familiar with your property and what it needs. Start by getting a free erosion assessment.

## DEBRIEF (5-10 MINUTES)

- Follow-up by moderator to further discuss any unexplored remarks.
- Let participants know how the information from the discussion will be used.
- Answer any participant questions.
- Let participants know we are closing the discussion and that the observers are happy to talk with them one-on-one.
- Thank participants.